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DEPUTY MINISTER DENIES ALLEGATIONS OF SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR KEEWATIN CENTRAL MLA

news/north
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Blindness: dealing with the fading light

by Steve Muise
Northern News Services
Madelline Carpenter knows what it is like to be able to walk on the land and see the caribou running, see the clear blue skies and see all the colors in the world. But eight years ago after

a night of drinking methyl alcohol, a gasoline additive, she lost that precious gift - she lost her sight. Thanks to the support of family and friends in her home community of Coppermine, she has adjusted to her new life of darkness.

"Coppermine treats me good," she said. Being blind in a small Arctic community isn't difficult - it's just one more of life's little challenges, she said. The man Carpenter lives with, Noel Adluk, can't see

as well as in his younger days either. Hunting is the one activity he misses, but because of his failing eyesight he has difficulties seeing the animals. He hung up his rifle, a difficult decision for any Inuit hunter. Adluk's eyesight problems occurred naturally unlike Carpenter's. He warns young people against drinking, especially substances such as methyl alcohol. "There's a limit to drinking."

social assistance. Extra money, they admit, would make them more self-sufficient. But the couple help each other coping with life and want to stay together. They still get fresh meat from relatives and friends in Coppermine. Their time in the community is well spent. Unable to find work - about 80 per cent of all blind people in Canada are unemployed - the two spend a lot of time visiting friends and helping out where needed.

opportunities to speak to others who are visually impaired and share experiences. "When you get blind like me you want to learn about people who are blind," said Carpenter. Both were impressed with the different types of visual aids available to help them with everyday life. Noel was happy choosing a new magnifier while Madelline, always interested in learning more, had her heart set on getting a computer.



But coping with Carpenter's blindness was just the first misfortune that the couple have had to deal with in the last eight years. Just a little more than a year after losing her sight Carpenter was severely burned in a house fire and lost many of her fingers. Adluk was diagnosed with cancer three years ago. Despite the circumstances life goes on for the couple and they are making the most of it. They believe bad things happen in threes and they've had their three. "I never have a problem," says Madelline. "I

Carpernter admits there are things she'd still like to do, including going to school and learning to operate a computer. "I want to learn how to talk English (better)," she said during the second day of a three-day conference dealing with visual impairments last week in Inuvik. Carpenter was one of several people from across the N.W.T. who participated in the Canadian National Institute for the Blind conference. The conference theme

QUOTE
"You put a uniform on these guys and they get carried away... I believe we refer to them in the Keewatin as Inspector Gadget." Keewatin Central MLA John Todd criticized fire inspectors last spring. Page A3

An Iqaluit snowmobile dealer has been charged with stealing from his own shop. RCMP have charged Polaris dealership owner Campbell, 36, with theft of \$1,000 and possession of stolen property.

Last year on Dec. 15, Iqaluit RCMP received a complaint that a customer's snowmobile had been stolen from the Iqaluit Kamutauyait Polaris shop parking lot.

"The machine had been dropped off for a regular mechanical review for insurance and to behold it went missing," says Iqaluit RCMP Corporal D.J. Essayenko.

Essayenko says the theft wasn't an insurance scam. Police searched the shop after the complaint and seized stolen snowmachine parts.

Now police have charged Campbell, who is currently being held in custody on other unrelated matters.

He is scheduled to appear March 22 in court in Iqaluit.

Co-op fire may be arson
A suspicious fire that gutted Fort McInerney's old Tellit Co-op store Thursday is being treated as arson, local RCMP say.

An arson specialist from the Inuvik fire marshal's office will investigate the pre-dawn blaze, said Sgt. Dale Erickson.

The main-street building was being used for cold storage for the new Co-op store.

Erickson had no damage estimate. He said management at the Co-op said some supplies and equipment had been removed from the building.

Firefighters spent two hours dousing the flames. There were no injuries.

Hammer blow caused death

Norman Wells resident Jody Mitchell Fry died after being struck on the head with a hammer at the Northern store staff house, RCMP said last week.

An autopsy at the Prince George Regional Hospital found the 19-year-old store employee's death last month was caused by acute craniocerebral trauma, said pathologist Jennifer Rice.

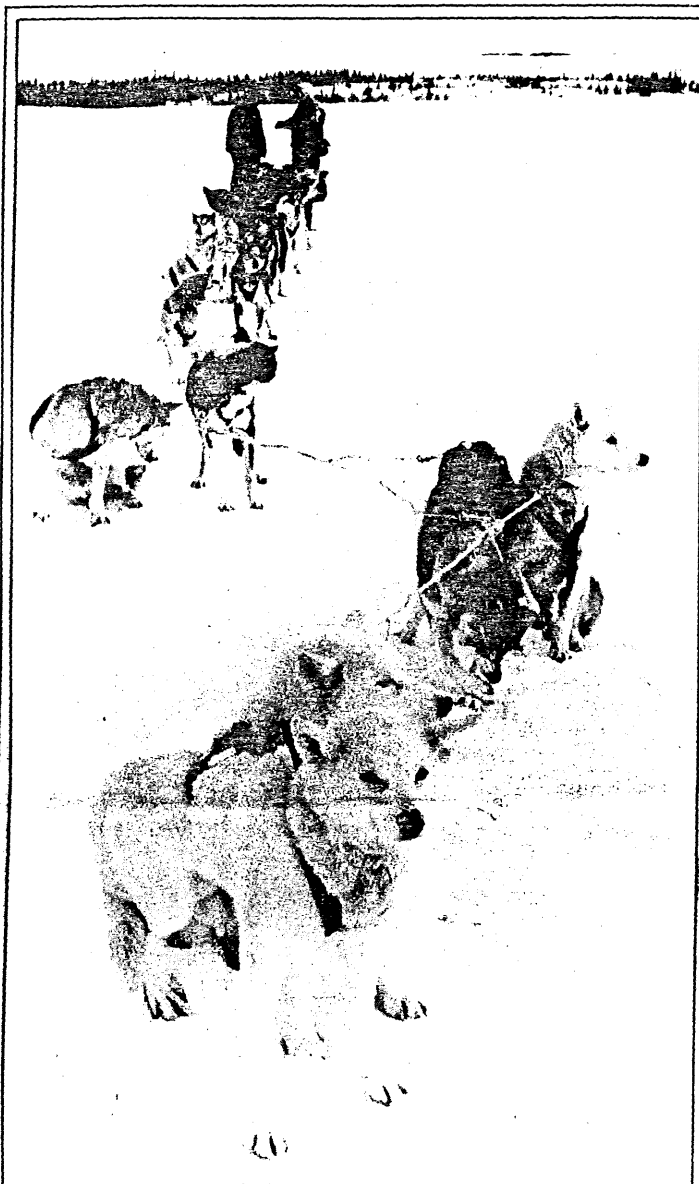
A Norman Wells man, 26-year-old Vorn Yim, has been charged with second-degree murder in connection with Fry's death.

The former Northern store employee is undergoing a psychological assessment at the Alberta Hospital in Edmonton. He is scheduled to appear in court in Yellowknife March 3.

The investigation continues.

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OFF TO THE RACES
Dog musher and rider. Dave Olsen arrived in Yellowknife from the Hoarfrost River on the East arm of Great Slave Lake. Olsen was on his way to compete in the Iditarod sled dog race in Alaska in early March.

Photo courtesy of Christian Olsen

HIV rates double in past year

by Patricia Saunders
Northern News Services
Evidence that reported cases of HIV infections have almost doubled in the last year may lead to changes in public awareness campaigns across the N.W.T.

Health Minister Rebecca Mike said during last Thursday's sitting of the legislative assembly that at least 24 Northerners are now infected with the deadly virus.

However, Mike told the assembly there may be more than 240 cases if estimates of the World Health Organization ring true; that

is, for every known infection, there are probably 10 other unidentified ones.

Health officials have mounted public awareness campaigns to encourage Northerners to practise safer sex but the message doesn't seem to have made a difference.

"It has become clear that public education activities to date have not been successful in changing sexual behavior which places people at risk of HIV infection."

Mike said that a redesign of educational materials is expected. The new design will reflect

changing attitudes and beliefs affecting sexual behavior.

A report tabling the findings of a health department review into the effectiveness of AIDS awareness campaigns across the North is scheduled for release later in the session.

HIV infections in the N.W.T. were first identified in 1987. The disease seems to spread in the North by sexual contact between men and women rather than contact between homosexual males and shared needles among drug users.

Deficit looms despite promises of balanced budget

by Patricia Saunders
Northern News Services

The territorial government may face a deficit this year if the legislative assembly scraps a payroll tax, Finance Minister John Pollard said in his budget speech Friday.

Northerners aren't being hit with tax hikes in the government's 1993-94 operations budget — apart from the one per cent payroll tax, which was proposed in September and is scheduled to take effect July 1. Pollard suggested it would be costly if MLAs scrap the new tax.

"It would affect us to the tune of \$8 million this year and that would take us into a deficit position," Pollard said.

The chair of the assembly's finance committee told the house a day before the budget address that members won't support the proposed tax "in its present form." Chairman Jim Antoine said the method proposed to intro-

duce the tax is flawed and should be revamped.

Pollard said Friday that the demise of the tax would also hurt a proposed tax credit designed to offset the North's higher living costs.

"There would be no question that we could not afford to put in the tax credit system if we didn't have the payroll tax."

Northerners may also face increases in fees and charges for government services if the budget receives a thumbs up from the assembly.

Not only do they face extra freight charges on liquor shipments but increases to hunting and game licences and other government services are expected.

Business owners in hamlets and settlements face a 50 per cent reduction to commercial water and sewer sub-

Please see Pollard, A26

Former fire marshal takes on John Todd

by Francis Thompson
Northern News Services

John Todd is unfit to be minister of safety and public services, the former N.W.T. fire marshal charged.

Kit Bell, who left the fire marshal's office in mid-

January, accused Todd of having displayed a "cavalier attitude towards fire safety" — both as a real estate developer and as chairman of the legislative assembly's finance committee.

"The man wanted to be a minister so bad that he would even accept to be minister of a department he was in violation of," Bell said last week from his Saskatchewan home.

Todd isn't commenting on Bell's accusations of safety violations and interference with the fire marshal's office.

Todd's executive assistant, Richard Bargery, said Todd would be in conflict if he commented on the safety record of his former companies. As a cabinet minister, conflict-of-interest rules forced Todd to divest himself of his business interests.

But John Quirke, the deputy minister of safety and public services, suggested Bell is motivated by a personal grudge.



Health Minister Rebecca Mike told the legislative assembly last Thursday that the known cases of HIV infections in the N.W.T. has almost doubled and now sits at 24.

Please see Be'

TENDER/NOTICE



GOVERNMENT TENDER

Northwest Territories Transportation
Hon. John Todd, Minister

Ferry Operation - Mackenzie River Crossing Route 3

Ferry operation for five navigation seasons (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, and 1997) at the Mackenzie River Crossing near Fort Providence on the Yellowknife Highway, NWT Route 3.

- Mackenzie River Crossing near Fort Providence, N.W.T. -

Sealed tenders addressed to Deputy Minister, Department of Transportation, Government of the Northwest Territories, P.O. Bag 4530, Yellowknife, N.W.T. X1A 2M6 (Delivered to the 2nd Floor, Lahm Ridge Tower, 4501 Franklin Ave.) or to the Director, Highway Operations Division, Department of Transportation, Government of the Northwest Territories, Box 1450, Hay River, N.W.T. X0E 0R0 (Delivered to the 2nd Floor, Gensen Building) will be received until:

3:00 P.M., LOCAL TIME, MARCH 12, 1993

Contractors may obtain tender documents from either of the above addresses as of February 24, 1993 on deposit of \$100.00 certified cheque or cash.

To be considered each tender must be submitted on the forms provided and must be accompanied by the security stated in the tender documents.

The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

Enquiries to: Gerald Perron
Government of the N.W.T.
Phone: (403) 695-2552

Pollard certain he can pick up deficit

Deficit, from A3

sidies. This reduction is expected to be phased in over the next three years.

And public housing tenants face a three-cent increase April 1 on electricity con-

sumption.

There are other issues — like a hospital billing dispute with the federal government, the question of pay equity and unexpected spending requirements — that could severely damage the health of

the government's balanced budget.

"I want to maintain a balanced budget. And I should tell you that although you're seeing a surplus of \$1.3 million in the budget, there's actually a difference of some

\$2.1 million which is the result of moving back the housing strategy. So we're actually...about \$885,000 in deficit right now."

However, Pollard is certain he can pick up the deficit "somewhere".

Bell bears personal grudge suggests Quirke

Former, from A3

Bell provided the media with copies of briefing notes to past ministers of safety and public services detailing alleged fire safety violations by Todd's former businesses.

"Inspections of two buildings controlled by Mr. Todd in Rankin Inlet during the past two years have identified 96 separate fire safety violations," a note dated July 30, 1992 read.

Bell alleged his office was "advised" by Quirke not to lay charges against Todd last summer, despite Todd's repeated failure to comply with fire inspectors' orders. Quirke disputed ever having discussed the issue of charges against Todd.

"I guess I'm seeing the dark side of one of the senior people in this government," Quirke said about Bell.

After Bell slammed the door on his job and sent all MLAs a copy of his letter of resignation criticizing Todd, Quirke said he ordered an investigation.

According to Quirke, an audit of records in Rankin Inlet showed that 224 fire safety violations had been found during 50 inspections of Todd's two buildings from 1990 to 1992, for an average of 4.48 violations per inspection.

In the same time, Quirke said, 1,245 violations were found during 297 inspections of all other buildings in Rankin, for an average of 4.19 violations per inspection.

In other words, Quirke said, there's no evidence that Todd's companies had a worse track record than any other landlord.

"In hindsight, there seems

to be something personal here," Quirke said.

In reviewing files, Quirke said it also appeared Bell didn't make an issue of Todd's alleged safety violations and lack of compliance with inspectors' orders until Todd launched a vigorous attack on the fire marshal's office last spring.

As chairman of the standing committee on finance, Todd had poked fun at the fire marshal's office, which he said was "almost out of control."

"They (fire inspectors) were buzzing around the communities, telling people they have to meet these new standards etc.," Todd told the legislative assembly last March 24. "We have 30 years of buildings in the Northwest Territories. We cannot solve all the upgrading problems in 30 days."

"You put a uniform on these guys and they get carried away, if I can be a little flippant" Todd continued. "I believe we refer to them in the Keewatin as 'Inspector Gadget.'"

Todd got a motion passed asking cabinet to "monitor" the fire marshal's office and have an "expeditious appeal mechanism" put in place.

In fact, Bell said, Todd should have been perfectly aware that there already is an appeal mechanism — the right of appeal is included on fire inspectors' orders.

What's more, the fire marshal's office has never tried to force old buildings to be upgraded to new building codes, Bell said.

The National Building Code of Canada and the National Fire Code of Canada, which the N.W.T. uses as its standards, both set rules for existing buildings,



Keewatin Central MLA John Todd, minister of safety and public services, has remained mum in the face of a full attack by former N.W.T. fire marshal Kit Bell.

not for ones about to be built, Bell wrote in another briefing note to his minister last summer.

In the N.W.T., there was little to no enforcement of building and fire codes for many years, Bell wrote.

This "has left a legacy of buildings that even at the time of construction met no codes," he said.

Bell said that when he joined the fire marshal's office in 1983, an average of 10 people died each year in fires in the N.W.T.

By 1992, this rate had been cut to 4.8 deaths per year, he said.

During the same period, the number of fire safety inspections jumped from 400 to 2,500.

Bell suggested this record would be in jeopardy if he accepted Todd as his minister.

"I would have to compromise myself to stay on as the fire marshal, which is not an option I have to live with," Bell told Todd in his resignation letter.

Housing strategy has support

Government, from A6

don't work for the government are saying there has to be some way of creating a level playing field for housing across the North, Arngna'naaq added.

Aivilik MLA James Arvaluk said he's heard similar comments from residents in Chesterfield Inlet, Coral Harbour and Repulse Bay.

And non-native government workers seem more worried about the policy's impact than Inuit employees.

"Non-Inuit workers have investments in the South and other financial concerns which the Inuit don't necessarily have to worry about; the Inuit often (budget differently), living from paycheck to paycheck," Arvaluk said.

The topic of government staff housing even stretched into a Feb. 9 meeting of Beaufort-Delta leaders in Inuvik.

Gruben gives credit

Roger Gruben, chair of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, and other chiefs in the region reportedly threw their support behind the strategy during the leaders' conference. "We have to give credit to the government for doing this," Gruben said.

But some of the loudest opposition has come from Eastern Arctic communities.

and that "you cannot successfully impose one here simply because you desire it to be so any more than a market economy has been successfully imposed" on former Eastern bloc countries.

Similarly, the Kitikmeot Board of Education has taken the government to task for its latest initiative.

"Since all our communities are off the highway system and since there are relatively few amenities in our communities compared to Yellowknife, it makes absolutely no sense to have our housing rents and market values set to reflect Yellowknife rates," said Dennis Lyall, chair of the Kitikmeot board.

Lyall also sent a letter to Kakfwi, expressing dissatisfaction with the strategy on behalf of board members, parents and children in the Kitikmeot.

He added that while housing changes are necessary, the board is faced with trying to run an effective education system where staff is demoralized and teachers feel compelled to look for work elsewhere.

Residents in other Eastern Arctic communities have expressed similar skepticism over the strategy.

Protests in Keewatin
William and Helena

"A rent increase of 25 per cent in one year would not be permitted in any other part of Canada, especially in subsidized housing agreements," said Belsey, a Rankin Inlet teacher who's worked for the government for 11 years. He added that the increase is the government's way of trying to tackle a deficit that's gone haywire.

Kakfwi released the government's long-term staff

"A rent increase of 25 per cent in one year would not be permitted in any other part of Canada"

-William Belsey

housing strategy last December. The policy is intended "to end the (GNWT's) landlord-tenant relationship with its employees, encourage home ownership and stimulate the growth of a private sector housing market."

The strategy is also meant to encourage energy conservation through a user-pay system for utilities. Tenants will end up paying the same rates for electricity, water and heating fuel as non-government workers.

existing market rates are lower. The July 1 increase will be limited to 25 per cent.

The government is also offering a number of subsidies to help smooth the transition.

For example, tenants will receive a \$5,400 standard accommodation allowance which is paid to Northern workers who rent at market rates or have their own accommodation.

A settlement allowance is also paid to employees in all communities expect Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Hay River Enterprise and Fort Liard to help compensate for higher living costs.

In addition to these subsidies, government employees will have the chance to buy the unit they live in. Tenants in communities outside Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik, who aren't interested in becoming homeowners, will be able to rent their units at market rates.

Communities with limited housing markets will continue to offer buy-back schemes to tenants who can't sell the units they own. And employees who live in communities without real estate agencies will be able to buy their units at 90 per cent of the depreciated value.

Changes to programs administered by the N.W.T.

Skills may mean jobs

Cooking, from A12

class.

While no formal cooking certificate is awarded upon successful completion of the four weeks — students do get a certificate of participation — the skills acquired will mean jobs for some students

as cooks.

Some may even land head cook positions.

The other students include Camilla Chocolate and Bette Quitte of Rae Lakes, Jerry Irish of Aklavik, Francis Washie and Adeline Wedzin of Fort Rae and Mary Ownigayak of Baker Lake.

KEEP OUR



